

## LIBERTY AND LOYALTY.

In this land and age we are apt pupils in the school of personal liberty. We are complacent in the consciousness of freedom of choice, judgment and conscience. This is well within limitations. It explains the fact that a man is not simply one of a multitude of units, but is unique, a master, an executor of his own decrees—not his own supremely, but his own from the standpoint of personal responsibility under God's authority. This conception of our relation to society has made the world's strongest characters and given to the world its greatest achievements and best possessions.

This attitude of the individual toward society has been pressed to a hurtful extreme, especially in the realm of citizenship. Serious problems that involve social order and the stability of government are the outcropping of the tendency to press the doctrine of personal liberty to a violent extreme. Anarchy is the bitter fruit of these excesses.

The Church is by no means immune to this infirmity. It appears in the more pronounced forms of congregationalism and is rife among a class of writers on religious topics who at heart have no sympathy with, nor respect for, ecclesiastical authority. They would gladly welcome a general revolt against Church government. They are ecclesiastical anarchists and their name is legion, for they are many.

Such a spirit of revolt is more culpable, if not more dangerous, than anarchy in the state; for while state constitutions are human in their origin, and forms of state government are the device of expediency, ecclesiastical government is sanctioned and solemnly enjoined by divine authority.

Whatever may be said of other forms of polity, it is uniformly claimed by Presbyterians, not only that church government is based upon the authority of Scripture, but that our form of government is authorized by Scriptural models and precepts. The Church therefore recognizes that not only the principal of government but the form of government is based upon inspired enactment.

Office bearers in the Church solemnly affirm their belief in, and solemnly subscribe to the symbols of government contained in our standards. The courts of the Church are composed of these office bearers, consisting of ruling and teaching elders. These courts are therefore composed of men who have pledged their loyalty to the recognized government of the Church. To ignore or violate that pledge is the rankest form of perjury.

There are purely ethical considerations, a respect for which compels ecclesiastical loyalty. They may be summarized in one sentence:—The churchman, whether layman or minister, derives his ecclesiastical standing from the Church to which he belongs. That Church furnishes the minister with his credentials. It protects his good name and guarantees his ministerial character and qualifications to the world. It stands sponsor for his soundness in the faith and furnishes his commission to preach the Gospel. A certificate of membership in a Presbytery should be a guarantee of cul-

ture, character, soundness in the faith and consecration to service. The Church asks and has a right to expect in return for this authentication, that its ministers shall prove worthy of it, by maintaining high standards in every department of their ministry and by a profound reverence for and enthusiastic support of its authority in matters of faith and practice.

Whether, therefore, as private members of the Church, or office bearers, or as subordinate courts, a due regard for obligations formally assumed and a due appreciation of the standing and privileges which the Church confers upon those within its fold, constrain us to a profound reverence for the authority which has been conferred upon the Church to be administered through its courts.

## AN ANTIQUATED SLANDER.

The "Cumberland Presbyterian," in an editorial on "Revision in the Southern Church," concludes that so long as our church "officially, in its doctrinal standards, appears to agree with the antiquated views held by some of the religious teachers, it is hardly the place for those who believe in an unlimited atonement and the salvation of all infants." The editor says, "It is pretty clear \* \* \* that the Southern Presbyterian Church still has within it a number of ministers, if no laymen, who believe that only some and not all infants are 'included in the election of grace and regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit.' Most of the opponents to any change (in the Confession) give other reasons for their position; but under them all lies the real reason we have just suggested."

The good editor evidently has as little confidence in the sincerity of some of our writers as he has knowledge of the facts of the case. In his proclamation of his church as believing in an unlimited atonement, he will hardly be regarded as representing the great mass of his own church. If he has been able to discover a single minister in our body "who really believes that only some and not all infants" are saved, he must have inside information such as none amongst us is possessed of. The only thing "antiquated" that we happen to be aware of in this case is the antiquated slander against our church which this editorial repeats, that our church holds to the damnation of some infants. The statement is very mildly and cautiously expressed, in the words "officially, in its doctrinal standards, appears to agree," etc., but it is all the same as untrue as it is ungenerous.

Upon reference to the Assembly's Minutes of 1901 we find that the Assembly did not exercise formal jurisdiction in the consolidation of colleges in Kentucky. The Synod reported at length its plan of consolidation "for the information of the Assembly," but not recognizing its jurisdiction. In this report occurs this statement: The consolidation of the colleges almost of necessity carries with it the consolidation of the seminaries." Under such conditions the Assembly gave its assent to the consolidation of the two theological seminaries, "leaving the entire responsibility thereof to the Synods of Kentucky and Missouri."